

incorporate the most valuable techniques that holistic practitioners use into their own. Allergen testing, for instance, in the treatment of migraine headaches or sprue (gluten sensitization) now appears to be a bona fide concomitant of office practice. Whether a similar desensitization can be used for other *brain allergies* identified by holistic practitioners remains to be proved. Similarly, use of herbal preparations which previously have been neglected as old fashioned or simply too faddish might well be reconsidered. For instance, it may make good sense to use the calming and soporific properties of camomile tea for a sick child, rather than the recently proved potentially carcinogenic antihistaminic sleep preparations or cough syrups.

Finally, seeing a health provider's role as helper and information giver rather than as cryptic, medicine dispenser reflects the American ethos of independence, autonomy and self-determination. We would all wish to discourage health approaches that encourage dependence, helplessness and lack of personal responsibility.

Perhaps, like the inhabitants of Thomas Mann's *Magic Mountain*, patients of both holistic and orthodox practitioners may gain the most by learning to see serious illness as a special life experience.

Although a radical idea, dying is increasingly being recognized as an important, albeit final, opportunity for growth and transformation. And in less extreme circumstances, a practitioner might improve a patient's well-being by helping him or her to understand, learn from and integrate the experience of healing.

Holistic health has this and probably much more to offer any open-minded physician, nurse or paraprofessional whose perspective on medical practice includes a concern for the integrity of the whole person.

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On Healing the Whole Person: A Perspective

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THE TERM holistic health has in a few short years, become nearly a household word. Holistic health centers have appeared like mushrooms, offering various alternative diagnostic and therapeutic modalities. For want of a better description of the nature of their practices, it appears that many alternative practitioners have jumped on a passing bandwagon and have adopted this *new*,

ill-defined term to mean whatever their practices happen to be. Because few people appear to know the origin or meaning of the word holistic and because the terms holistic health and whole person are so often misused, this commentary points out the source and original meaning of the concept.

The word holism refers to the concept that any entity is greater in its wholeness than in the sum of its parts. Holistic refers to the state of integration of a person, as a body and a soul, with the spiritual self, making him or her whole.^{1,2} Because these terms and concepts derive from biblical Greek, it is necessary to look to the Bible to

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understand the context in which they were originally used.

The word holistic is derived from the Greek word *holos*. *Holos* means the entirety or completeness of a thing in its wholeness,³ and is found throughout the *New Testament*.⁴ The state of wholeness and of health was very often equated with salvation, so that a person who was made whole, or who was healed, was saved. For example, in the account of the paralytic who was lowered through the roof (Mark 2:1-12), it is stated "Which is easier to say to the paralytic, 'Your sins are forgiven,' or to say, 'Arise, and take up your pallet and walk?'"

The holistic concept is defined by the Apostle Paul (I Thessalonians 5:23): "May the God of peace Himself sanctify you wholly; and may He preserve you whole and entire," (literally, "the whole of you") "in spirit, and in soul, and in body, without blame until the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ." Paul is expressing in this concept that we exist as multidimensional beings: in spirit (*pneuma*), the immortal principle and the source of life; in soul (*psyche* or *anima*), the seat of emotions and of thoughts, and in body (*soma*), the flesh created of the dust of the earth.⁵

For "the whole of you" or "whole and entire," Paul uses the Greek word *holokleron*,⁶ implying the completeness of a person in all his parts, from his origin at the Godhead, through all dimensions of existence, to his manifestation in a physical body.^{3,7} Paul uses the Greek word *holoteles*⁶ to denote *wholly*, and to imply that the whole is integrated and brought to completeness and perfection through sanctification.³ Hence, in the holistic state, the whole being, while multidimensional, is sanctified in its integration, its completeness, its perfection and its wholeness.⁷

While writers of the early Christian church expressed similar concepts,⁸ over the centuries interest in the wholeness and integration of our compound nature has subsided. The *Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible* (1962) contains the following statement:

Jesus was firmly convinced of his Father's purpose for human wholeness and salvation. . . . Jesus viewed each person as an essential unity of body and mind. This holistic emphasis was as far removed from the Greek concept of body as a prison house for the soul as it was from the outlook of Descartes in a later age. Cartesian philosophy divided the personality into physical and mental categories, considering the latter alone to be the proper sphere of operation of the church.⁹

It appears that Cartesian philosophy furthered the

artificial division between physical and spiritual healing, and between science and religion. It must be noted that this artificial separation of body and mind—of things physical and things spiritual—was not part of the teachings of the early Christian church.

The words holistic and holism, as such, first appear to have been used by Jan Smuts in his book, *Holism and Evolution*, published in 1926.¹⁰ Smuts served as a general in the British Army and as prime minister of South Africa.¹¹ In his book he describes an evolutionary concept in which "holism underlies the synthetic tendency in the universe." Entities growing, developing and evolving become at some point complete in their nature, so that their wholeness becomes greater than the mere sum of their parts. They then move to new levels of being—new *wholes*—brought about by the creative force within, which he calls holism. The whole-making tendency in evolution

is nothing but the gradual development and stratification of a progressive series of wholes, stretching from the inorganic beginnings to the highest levels of spiritual creation. Wholeness, healing, holiness—all expressions and ideas springing from the same root in language as in experience—lie on the rugged upward path of the universe.¹⁰

Commenting on the concept of wholeness, Sir William Osler, former Professor of Medicine at Johns Hopkins University, said "The greatest aid in the prevention of disease is to preserve the due proportion of mind and body, for there is no proportion or disproportion more productive of health and disease, and of virtue and vice, than that between soul and body."¹² Osler offers the following quote and comment on passages from Plato's *Dialogues*, " 'Hippocrates, the Asclepiad, says that the nature even of the body can only be understood as a whole.' The importance of healing the whole and not the part is insisted on. 'For this is the great error of our day (*in Hippocrates' time!*) in the treatment of the human body, that physicians separate the soul from the body.' "¹²

Holistic health, then, is a state of integration of the physical body and of the mental and emotional soul-self, in harmony with the spiritual self. This holistic or whole-person concept does not in any way imply an over-emphasis on any one diagnostic or therapeutic modality nor that any person can do anything without training. And it certainly does not intend to imply a cover for

a collection or smorgasbord of questionable and unfounded alternative practices.

Rather, the concept refers to the fact that the whole of a person is greater than the mere sum of his parts, and that there is an approach to the whole person who is ill, instead of merely to his parts or to his illness as if they were separate from the whole of him. Therefore, one can speak of the holistic approach to the patient with cancer,^{1,13} for example, instead of an approach to the cancer or to the affected organ.

Whole person does not refer merely to the whole physical body—that is, from head to toe. Rather, the concept adds to the physical body the additional dimensions of the mental and spiritual self (the Apostle Paul's *holokleron*), and implies the treatment of the parts of the person as an integrated whole (the Apostle Paul's *holoteles*).

Most alternative therapies, which may not have been proved effective by scientific methods, must depend in part or entirely on faith for their effectiveness. Faith can be an effective part of the healing process, and probably is the cause of many spontaneous remissions of presumably incurable diseases. (Remember the biblical admonition [Matthew 9:22; Mark 5:34; Luke 8:48, 17:19, 18:42], "Your faith has made you well."¹⁴) But the danger inherent in alternative therapies is that one may come to believe that the therapies are effective in and of themselves, without taking into account the component of faith. Licensure of alternative practitioners could result in institutionalizing techniques which are therapeutic only when carried out by certain persons who are capable of generating faith on the part of others. One must be careful, therefore, not to read into the concept of the whole person an implication of alternative foolishness which is not there.

Examples of approaching the whole person are hospices for dying patients and their families. The hospice concept has become very popular in the United States, following its beginnings in Britain, and has been endorsed by various state medical associations¹⁵ and the American Medical Association.¹⁶ The variety and functioning of hospice programs are well described elsewhere.¹⁷⁻²² Markel and Sinon, of the American Cancer Society, state "The hospice program is a humane, holistic approach to medical care that has great support among all elements of society." They define hospice as a physician-

directed health care delivery program of coordinated services which "employs a multi-faceted approach: narcotic and non-narcotic analgesics are used in physical symptom control, and the interdisciplinary hospice team provides psychologic, sociologic, and spiritual services as they are needed. The patient *and* family is the primary unit of care. . . ."²³

The hospice concept then, involves coordinated care for the patient's physical body during the dying process. But the program also involves concern for the mental and emotional well-being of both the patient and his family in their adjustment to the reality of death, in their education for the care of the patient during the dying process and in their making practical arrangements for the death, the funeral and the care of those surviving. Under the guidance of clergy, the hospice concerns itself with the spiritual and religious needs of the patient and family, such as their fear of dying, their concerns regarding their relationship with their Creator, and their guilt and anxiety over wrongs done to others and to each other. By this multidisciplinary and multidimensional approach, the dying patient is viewed and cared for as a whole person.

It is unfortunate that a person must wait until he is dying before he can partake of a health care program that treats him as a whole rather than as organs and diseases. There is need for a concept of the hospice for the living, in which, in the words of Hippocrates (as quoted by Osler) "The importance of healing the whole and not the part is insisted on."¹²

We must retain and make full use of the great scientific advances we have achieved in the treatment of our physical bodies. But to this knowledge of the chemistry and physiology of disease should be added the education of and understanding by the patient to assume responsibility for his own life-style and health habits and to gain insights into his emotions and feelings and their role in health and disease. A patient should be treated as a person and not just as a bag of chemicals or as the "gall bladder waiting in X-ray." The soul of each person has an existence just as does the physical body, and the great error of our day, just as in Hippocrates' time, is that "physicians separate the soul from the body."¹² Man does not exist apart from his Creator, and the spiritual side of man should be involved in the healing process.

The clergy have an important role to play in the healing of the whole person, perhaps more vital than many hospital chaplains and physicians fully realize. For healing is not an affair just of the physical body; rather, it is as much related to one's capacity to give and to receive love as it is to the ministrations of the physician. While physicians may rearrange tissues, balance chemicals and kill bacteria, the real healing of the body comes from within the person and is related to the soul-body interaction. As Sir William Osler so astutely observed, "there is no proportion or disproportion more productive of health and disease . . . than that between soul and body."¹²

The concept of the healing of the whole person, or holistic medicine, is not new—in fact, as has been shown, it is ancient. It entails approaching each patient as a physical body, a mental and emotional self, and a spiritual being (expressed by the biblical Greek word *holokleron*); it entails treating each patient as an integrated whole (expressed by the Greek *holoteles*), and it entails faith in relying on the healing from within to manifest itself. In many instances it may not be acceptable, practical or economical to implement fully the concept of healing of the whole person. Certainly experimentation, clinical experience and much understanding and cooperation will be needed in order that practical approaches to treating persons in their wholeness, such as a concept of hospice for the living, may become a reality.

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Holistic Medicine: From Pathology to Prevention

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SINCE THE MIDDLE AGES humankind has been divided into separate aspects of body, mind and spirit. This split is still evidenced in the present structure of the healing professions. Physicians

are dedicated to the treatment of the body; psychologists and psychiatrists are concerned with treating the mind, and yet a third group, the clergy, is attendant to spiritual healing. Such fragmentation and specialization is a relatively recent phenomenon. More unified concepts of health and disease extend further back to the roots of medicine in the late Assyrian civilization, and in the Greek culture as exemplified in the writings of Hippocrates and Aristotle, who clearly

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